

# The Christian

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Edited by  
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# News-Letter

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**D**EAR MEMBER,

We are so frequently reminded that roughly nine out of ten persons in our population have no commitment to any branch of the organized church and scarcely any acquaintance with the simplest facts about Christianity, that the matter has become a commonplace. What is being done about this immense challenge to education and evangelism?

We start with the disadvantage of not really knowing the extent and nature of the task with which the Church is faced. Mass Observation has made some surveys to ascertain the extent, in sample areas, of the drift from organized religion and religious faith. Church attendances can be counted, but when it comes to measuring how much people know and how far Christian values still mould personal decision and action, generalization may be dangerously misleading. There was published a few months ago in Paris a small book called *La France : pays de mission*.<sup>1</sup> It was a detailed survey of the religious situation in a suburban area of Paris, carried out with great attention to detail by two Catholic priests. Their conclusions are summarized in the title of their book. No similar detailed survey has so far been undertaken by religious organizations in this country. A near approach is a questionnaire to Church Councillors circulated in his diocese by the Bishop of Sheffield,<sup>2</sup> designed to discover how many people in each parish have, or have had, contact with the church through baptism, marriage, Sunday school, or in other ways, and on this basis to plan the future work of each congregation.

## RELIGIOUS EDUCATION AND EVANGELISM

An important report has recently been published on the religious education of adults, by the adult education section of the National Society's Education Committee under the chairmanship of Sir Richard Livingstone.<sup>3</sup> It finds the cause of the present ignorance of the fundamentals of the Christian faith in the fact that "for the vast majority religious education stops short at the point where

<sup>1</sup> This survey is not yet obtainable in this country.

<sup>2</sup> Published in 1944 with a charge to the diocese, consisting of six addresses on the Church's task in modern society, under the title *Let Us Go Forward*. S.C.M. Press, 2s.

<sup>3</sup> *The Church and Adult Education*. National Society, 69 Great Peter Street, London, S.W. 1, 1s.

religious interest is developing," namely, when school-leaving age is reached. "The only way to solve the problem," says Sir Richard, "is through a system of adult religious education, which will fortify the faith and deepen the religious knowledge of the believer, and will give those who have either rejected, or drifted away from, or never known Christianity, the chance of learning its meaning and claim. Such a system the Church does not possess." The Church of England Tutorial Classes and the Methodist Correspondence Courses which are described in appendices have been a partial answer, but no church has an organized system.

The report outlines a thoroughgoing scheme of religious education for adults. Among its recommendations are whole-time organizers at the centre and in every diocese, study and discussion groups in every parish, training of the clergy and of suitable laity in the methods of modern adult education, residential centres for courses and conferences, co-operation between the churches and by the churches with such statutory and voluntary bodies as are already concerned in adult education in a general sense. The method is to be "that of discussion by a group engaged in co-operative study; the teacher must be a leader rather than instructor." It is not quite the whole story to summarize the report as "more and better study circles," but it is not far from the mark.

No distinction is made in the report between "education" and "evangelism." Discussion would be a great deal simpler if we could describe the former as the building up in the faith of those who are inside the churches, and the latter as reaching out to those who are outside the churches and bringing them in. We are denied this simple distinction by the lack of a commonly understood definition of who do or do not belong to the Church. As it is, the term "religious education" is being applied to both activities, and with some justice, for in all evangelism, if it is not pure emotionalism, there is an educational content of acquainting them with the facts. Nevertheless, the approach to the committed Christian and to the outsider are different.

## THE EDUCATION OF THE FAITHFUL

It is perfectly true that we have horribly neglected the duty of *direct* teaching and training, but a great deal of religious education has been done in ways which Sir Richard Livingstone does not mention. In any church congregation there are never more than a few who are really gripped for any length of time by group study and discussion, or who do more than a limited amount of religious reading. There are a far greater number who are interested in church activities. They collect for this or that charity, support missions, engage in moral welfare work, ring bells, sing in choirs, teach in Sunday schools and do a thousand other things. Each and every



one of these activities has its educational content. Thousands of people in this country owe their love and understanding of the church's worship not to any paid tutor or to the airing and sharing of opinions in discussion, but to organist or choirmaster who gave all he knew, transmitted some of his enthusiasm, and revealed through the tedious discipline of regular practice the treasure of the Church's music. The modern missionary movement is nearly always spoken of from the angle of the mission field, and its function in the churches of this country as one of our most powerful means of religious education is less often realized. A man or woman may begin to take an interest in "missions" at as simple a level as a desire to do something to mitigate the sufferings of lepers in Africa or child mothers in India. Giving money, joining a working party, serving on a missionary committee, learning of the Church's work on the mission field has led many people to set a new value upon their own Christian heritage and has sent them back to rediscover it. The missionary societies have a large equipment for educational work in the churches—educational staff, presses publishing books and magazines, films and exhibitions, conferences. Within the work of the various societies in the home churches are a great variety of smaller organizations. All the Free Church missionary societies, for example, have organizations for girls and young women. I have been astonished by the simple ease with which a dozen girls will carry through a week-end conference for their movement, planning Bible study, conducting their own worship, acting as chairmen, group leaders, secretaries, moving out of the concerns of their own group in their own church into those of their society and of the church overseas. Another example may be taken from the Church of England Moral Welfare Association, which in nearly every diocese supports highly-trained workers, cares for unmarried mothers and their babies, and does a great variety of sex education in schools and churches. At their last School for Speakers a course of lectures was delivered by the Professor of Moral Theology at Oxford on the Christian Basis of Morality. They are heavy theological going, yet the school was the most successful the Association has ever held.

That is the way the churches have done their religious education of adults: they have started people on doing the works of Christ, and that activity stimulates and indeed makes imperative the desire for the doctrine. The churches have shown astonishing knowledge of psychology in this indirect approach.

These indirect methods have two advantages. First the possession of a concrete objective (singing an anthem, running a missionary exhibition, teaching a Sunday school class) prevents discussion from running away into the fruitless sands of argument. Second: the danger of church study and discussion groups is that either only the most articulate come at all, or they tend to take the

lead all the time. The type of church society which mixes some Bible study and discussion with some dramatics one night, and mending the hassocks the next, ensures that the type of person who is led on one occasion is leader on the next. This is a very important emphasis on the principle of "diversity of gifts but the same Spirit," over against the highly dangerous doctrine pertaining widely in secular society of a "caste of leadership."

We now need a great deal of work on how to improve the quality of the religious education which is given through existing organizations and organs, using more modern methods and equipment. As the churches press on into new fields of Christian service the fullest possible use must be made of them educationally so that action enlarges knowledge and enriches faith.

## THE APPROACH TO THE OUTSIDER

The task of evangelism has two aspects. One is the communication of the gospel to the individual. The other is the growth in the Christian life in the work and worship of the Church. Evangelism is not complete when a man says that he believes Christianity to be true. Without this life in the Church in worship, reading, fellowship and activity there is no full Christian experience. Certain things can be learned and experienced in corporate life which cannot be learned or experienced at all by the isolated individual.

In his first broadcast of the year, Dr. Welch, Director of Religious Broadcasting, pointed out that the old means by which ideas were communicated were "preaching, teaching in schools, music, architecture, sculpture, painting, drama and printing and, in all of these, the Church was pioneer and leader; it used all these to preach the Gospel. In the modern world the decisive influence on the lives of the 90 per cent who do not regularly attend church are the press, the cinema, the theatre, advertising, cheap literature, and radio; and, from all of these, except radio, the Church is, at present, virtually excluded." He continued by saying that the thing which radio was admirably adapted to doing was to communicate great religious truth: "The essential purpose of religious broadcasting . . . is to communicate the Gospel to as many people as possible," and he continued, "religious broadcasting will do less and less what the churches are doing far better." This is a declaration of policy which ought to be of the greatest service, for we know where we are: religious broadcasting is not to be an attempt to do the second of the two evangelistic tasks, but a concentration largely upon the first. There are still hundreds of congregations who have not begun to take account (as Sir Richard Livingstone does most fully) of the potentialities of religious broadcasting in the double task of education and evangelism. To imagine that the whole work of evangelism



could be done by radio would, of course, be absurd : it is an immensely valuable adjunct to the work of the Church.

In a small book entitled *We Shall Rebuild*, Dr. George McLeod, the Founder of the Iona Community, tackles the question of evangelism from a different angle. All that he says about the religious situation inside and outside the churches supports Sir Richard Livingstone: "Of sixty youngsters over seventeen, in a *Bible Class* of a well-set congregation, nearly all the parents being church members, it was found that only three read the Book regularly and only twelve possessed it." But he asks in what way the message and organization of the Church are unmatched to the present situation.

Dr. McLeod traces the drift from the churches to two main causes. First, the churches have not recognized that Christendom has collapsed and their message is unadjusted to a situation on which anti-Christian ideologies are increasing their hold on men's minds. "A young man in the last century might have learnt his Christian principles in the Church, and, in going out, say, to build the Trade Union Movement, would have found himself surrounded in the executive of the movement by men who were actually local preachers on the Sunday. But his grandson, if he goes out to-day armed only with Christian principles, will find instead that the dominating philosophy of the Shop-Steward Movement, in which he becomes involved, is at variance at every point *with the Christian understanding of the world*. He goes out, conscious of sin as the root of our disorders, to discover, in the area for his practice, the contrary teaching that sin is all outmoded ; and that we are victims of an order of society imminent for destruction by reason of the point in history to which we have arrived. . . . Indeed he will have a first-class decision to make. He will either give up the contest and stick to the Church, or he will give up the Church and accept the total philosophy of the Shop Stewards for his moralities, social and personal, and their methods for the achievement of the new day."

The most damaging result of this tendency is that the church tends to become the funk hole for those who run away from the pressing questions of the day and is "filling up with the less significant of the manhood of our nation." Dr. McLeod insists that there must be sound religious teaching, but "intertwined with the Bible Revelation, we must not fear to have lectures and discussions of to-day's most controversial issues. Marx must find a place in our discussion ; political leaders of every shade must come to face the barrage of our informed questions as to the degree in which they take account of the nature of man and the Christian thesis of our destiny." This is in sharp distinction to Sir Richard Livingstone's report. He is very chary of introducing non-Christians into his groups, for "if a group is wholly composed of the devout who would be bewildered

if not shocked by critical questions . . . . no good might be served by a mixed group." After two or three sessions of uninterrupted study, members may perhaps invite non-Christian friends. This entirely leaves out of account the fact that from Monday to Saturday the devout are in shop and office outnumbered by ten to one and challenged by word or action at every point.

Second, Dr. McLeod sees the root of the church's weakness in society in the collapse of the witness of the local *congregation*, seen not as a collection of individuals each witnessing to their faith in their own way, but as a corporate entity bearing a single witness. How can any congregation influence a locality when half its members live miles away? We are burdened, he says, by "too great a proportion of 'confucians' in the membership: those who come at less and less frequent intervals to worship at the tomb of their ancestors: demanding, at great distances, the constant visitation of their ministers whose hours, spent in travel, are thereby denied to the hosts of the unchurched who live immediately around the doors." Families are divided—parents travelling occasionally to the church of which they are members, children attending Sunday schools and youth clubs nearer home so that they miss the most potent religious influence, "the sight of their parents constantly bowed in public worship." His facts about the non-residence of church members in Edinburgh would apply to any fair-sized town in England.

Dr. McLeod summarises his argument by saying that "in everyday life and in bearing the pressures of the world the church is 'corporately involved,' while as a minority of the faithful in a disbelieving world it is 'corporately separate.'" He describes a new type of evangelism undertaken not by missionaries, but by a whole congregation in a down town church in Glasgow summoning men to baptism. This emphasis on the congregation is found within the Anglican Communion in the revival of parish communions and of meetings of the congregation. Congregations which are embarking on this line of action now have a small journal called *The Leap*<sup>1</sup> by which they can keep in touch with each other. The necessity of the congregation meeting and acting as a corporate unity is treated from a theological angle in Daniel Jenkins' little book *The Church Meeting and Democracy*.<sup>2</sup>

Professor Mannheim's Supplement is concerned with the general question of how in fact ideas circulate in and permeate society, but its relevance to the work of the Church, which this letter has discussed, is obvious. Yours sincerely,

Kathleen Bliss

<sup>1</sup> *The Leap*. Published by Father Jim Wilson, 72 Eversholt Street, London, N.W. 1.

<sup>2</sup> Independent Press, 2s.



# THE MEANING OF POPULARISATION IN A MASS SOCIETY <sup>1</sup>

By PROFESSOR KARL MANNHEIM

A dynamic society depends for its progress on creative personalities who are the sources of fresh inspiration in various fields. These are not the sole agents of the transmission of culture, which is a function of the whole people ; each class and section of the population has its own share and responsibility for its maintenance and development. But our purpose is to direct attention here to the function of those members of a Society who in a pre-eminent degree originate the dominant ideas and form or change the sensibility of their time.

## THE EMERGENCE OF THE NEW

These individuals and groups who are the source of original inspiration are not to be identified with educated people in general. They constitute a class which is hardly capable of scientific definition. There is no objective measurement that can be applied, and the judgment depends largely on the personal valuation of the observer. This is not a reason, however, to refrain from discussing the significance of such persons. Whether we agree or not that a particular individual is entitled to be included in the group, those who belong to it are a very important factor in the life of society. Their function and the condition of their survival must be investigated, if we wish to preserve them.

We may perhaps define rather more precisely the people we have in mind by saying that they are those who have the mental power to break the crust of convention in every sphere of life by penetrating into new possibilities of the mind and of social living. Both individual and social life in all their manifestations tend to become conventionalized in order to make social communication easier. What is in the beginning a new vision, a new mental association, a new way of life quickly becomes stereotyped. Its freshness and living power last only for a short period. The need of the mind to deal with established patterns and social necessity combine to impose on it a growing rigidity. Its horizon becomes fixed and sets bounds to the deep flow of endless potentialities of the mind and life. It becomes a style, which can be imitated by others and further developed on the objective plane.

<sup>1</sup> The ideas expressed in this Supplement will be developed more fully in Professor Mannheim's forthcoming book, *Essentials of Democratic Planning*, which he is writing for the Royal Institute of International Affairs.

## POSSIBILITIES AT WIDELY DIFFERENT LEVELS

It is a question of the highest importance, more particularly in the conditions of a mass society, whether this break-through of a fresh vision and perception of new meanings takes place only at the highest levels in small groups and has then to be communicated in a diluted form to the masses or whether it may occur at many different levels of human experience and in society at large.

It was possible for societies with a minority culture, such as feudal society and modern bourgeois society, to conceive of culture as accessible only to the educated few. They were able to neglect the problem of dissemination and acquiesce in a development in which the best became gradually isolated, so that authors wrote, and painters painted, for each other, losing touch with the foundations of the common life and becoming proud of living in ivory towers. But whether this can continue in an age of the masses has become highly problematical. The small number of isolated experts of culture and the uprooted masses tend to fall apart. When this danger becomes acute, the only way of integrating the social body is to take the problem of popularization really seriously.

One difficulty in discussing the matter is that we have no satisfactory term for creative dissemination. Popularization is still conceived as a dilution of real substance. Those who originate at lower levels are thought of as merely popularizers. But this way of looking at things is dangerous. The future of culture depends not only on our ability to guarantee the conditions of survival for original thinkers at higher levels, but also on our inventiveness in finding new forms for the dissemination of the substance of culture without diluting it.

The problem has been solved in the past in a simpler setting. Mediaeval society had the power of expressing the common religious experience on all levels—for the educated in the language of theology and for the community in the language of church architecture, music, images, symbols, even of the farce and the grotesque. One has only to remember the gargoyles on Notre Dame which represent the underworld both in the language of theological symbols and in the language of pure visuality which made it intelligible to everybody. It is in this spirit and in this direction that we have to look for new forms of dissemination, in order to get away from the idea of popularization as mere dilution.

The fact that genuineness may exist on lower as well as on higher levels may be illustrated by the example of jazz. A jazz rhythm may have been in the first instance a direct expression of ecstasy, even though later the pattern became so strongly conventionalized that any good musical craftsman could produce hundreds



of variations of jazz music and only the connoisseur would know that they are the work of routine, professing to represent the experience of ecstasy.

Or take the creations of Noel Coward. These are the product of real creativeness; he conveys a new type of vibration to a simpler type of mind, yet it would be wrong to consider him simply as a kind of publicity agent for those who create on a higher plane. He genuinely participates in the less sophisticated experiences of the many, but gives them, through his originality, the same unexpected shock which undermines our complacency when we enjoy great art or listen to a great orator.

## CONVENTION AND SPONTANEITY

While society cannot help conventionalizing even the higher types of vision, its real life runs through the undercurrent of genuine and spontaneous expression. It may go on producing the most beautiful patterns on the level of convention, but if communication through this undercurrent ceases and new eruptions cease to occur, the society is dead.

This applies not only to emotions, but also to thought. The thinking of most people is little more than a running through established pathways of association which they have picked up at school or the university or from books. Even when they intend to say something new, they find it impossible to get out of the grooves of prevailing conventions. The real originator is the person who can break away from the established pathways of thought and allow new motives to come up from his unconscious to the surface and find expression in unexpected associations.

Examples are plentiful in the field of literature and art. But the phenomenon of the break-through which sweeps away conventions is found in every sphere of life. In the field of psychology Freud opened up a new dimension of the mind, and since then hundreds of workers have developed the vision into routine theory and technique. In politics Marx and Lenin undoubtedly saw new ways of handling social situations and apprehended the new atmosphere of industrial civilization, and this achievement will remain, whether one agrees or not with their solutions of political problems. In economics Lord Keynes opened up a new possibility and dozens of lesser thinkers have since seen new combinations. One of the most striking examples of expressing what is deepest in life on a level of culture which is usually considered "low" is the German variation of the *Beggar's Opera* by Brecht and Weil. Both in its musical setting and in its libretto this was a disturbing experience

—the fullest reflection of human despair as it permeates a disintegrating society which has lost its faith in everything.

What we have to avoid at all costs is the academic aloofness which finds life sublime only in a kind of stratosphere where our minds are kept safely at a distance from suffering and vulgarity, and from the world of daily contacts in which people are jealous and hate one another and things really hurt.

## FIRM GRASP OF THE ESSENTIAL

There is often an artificial clumsiness in closed academic circles that contrasts unfavourably with the simplicity and clarity of good dissemination. To become intelligible to the multitude we have to fasten on what is essential. Descartes, for example, in his treatise on method suggests the need for getting away from the complexity of scholastic discussion and the dogmatism of closed groups. He made it a criterion for the new type of thought that it should be clear and distinct. Here we have an anticipation of the democratising process, i.e. the search for truth that is in principle accessible to everybody, not because it is trivial or diluted, but because it is reduced to the really human elements in knowledge. Another example is that of Amos Comenius in his *Orbis Pictus*, in which he set out to teach through pictures and images instead of abstract concepts. He thus initiated a process towards concreteness and visuality, in which thinking and teaching became simpler, but not necessarily diluted.

These are examples of creative dissemination because the need for simplicity creates clarity and so improves the quality of self-expression. This is the reason why it is a mistake to consider those who express real substance on a simpler level as merely publicity agents. Those who succeed in the great venture of being genuine on the lower levels of communication contribute at least as much to the preservation of culture as those who keep existing fires burning in small selected circles.

The necessity of establishing new forms of communication between those who originate a new type of experience, and spread inspiration on different levels of our culture, needs the strongest possible emphasis. The mere preservation of the old tradition can achieve little more than the salvaging of some values in a general collapse. The creation of broader channels and living-space for the spirit is, on the other hand, the peculiar task of our age.

Anyone who has taken part in adult education courses, or given addresses to young people on social and psychological questions, must have realized that the mental climate was much more favourable for the discussion of real issues and that the readiness to go



to the bottom of things was much greater than in many academic circles. The latter, as a result of continuous occupation with the subject, or out of vanity and snobbishness, are often too much inclined to pick out small miscellaneous points rather than to go to the roots of questions.

Another example may be given from literary studies. In Germany the love-stories of knights were translated in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries into popular books for the new rising class of burghers. The average historian of literature has treated this popularization as a "come-down" to a lower level, which it was if you think of it in terms of social class. But there soon arose a literary school in Germany which showed that this translation of mediocre poetry into prose, far from being a deterioration, was a new form of condensation. In place of making the old symbols shallow, it deepened them. In the process of bringing ideas into circulation, frivolous elements and cheap romance were brought into the new atmosphere of serenity of a rising class and invested with its new sense for the tragic. The absorption of the mental climate of a new group and the assimilation of its new potentialities were in this case the key to creative popularization.

## CREATIVE COMMUNICATION BETWEEN DIFFERENT TYPES OF MIND

In the democratic approach popularization is conceived as a meeting of different types of mind. In a spirit of mutual deference there is a give-and-take which is bound to be creative. The speaker who has something to convey has not only to fall back upon the essentials of what he has to say, with a resulting gain in clarity, but he has also to absorb the vital interests and real mind of the recipients, the effect of which is to deepen the content. This may come about, not only when the hearers are members of a different class, but when they belong to any other group, another party, denomination or nation, which has a different type of life and culture.

Real dissemination in a mass society must consequently be based on careful studies, carried out by field-work, of the formative influences and actual state of mind of those to whom the ideas are to be conveyed. The needs and frustrations, the desires and hopes, the intellectual frame-work, the conceptual apparatus, the vocabulary of those whom we address have to be known and absorbed by those who take their audience seriously.

In simpler societies the good teacher, the good parson, the good orator, the good writer could absorb unconsciously the frame of mind and the emotional state of those to whom he spoke. But

to-day, even in a different district of the same metropolis, fundamentally different conditions are found in different circles, and different reactions have to be expected. Consequently, those who teach and have something to impart need to be trained to assimilate and to interpret correctly the minds of those to whom they speak. In this the new discipline of the sociology of knowledge, which studies systematically different existing frames of mind, ideologies and the sociology of education, which studies the concrete conditions in which education takes place, can be of great help.

An uninformed and uninspired popularization in a mass society not only remains ineffective, but gravely lowers the intellectual level. It leads to talking down to people and to a mushroom growth of minor minds, who write text books on every new idea they come across and thus exploit and flatten out the ideas of the future. The solution to our dilemma may be looked for in the emergence of new standards, which will enable us to distinguish the mere popularizer from one who can genuinely express the same truth and the same experience at different levels for different audiences. Only those who have the capacity to communicate with any audience realize how much fertilizing power there is in saying the same thing to different people. A teacher who takes every reaction of the audience seriously, and meets both response and resistance with an equally open mind and a full sense of responsibility, will be rewarded by discovering for himself unexpected facets of the subject and unknown strata of his own mind.

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